

9

Oklahoma Bookstore
Owner's Conviction Reversed

In a decision on September 15, the Oklahoma Court of Appeals reversed the conviction of Robert Wood under the Oklahoma criminal syndicalism law for possessing and selling Communist Party literature. Although the appeal in the present case involved only one man, Mr. Wood, four other people were convicted on similar charges and placed under sentence of ten years imprisonment and \$5,000 fine. The Wood case was remanded to the District Court in Oklahoma City, where International Defense attorneys planned to move for final dismissal of the charges against Mr. Wood and the others. The State had 15 days in which to apply to the Criminal Court of Appeals for a rehearing of the appeal. The American Civil Liberties Union believes that all the charges will be dismissed.

Readers of PW will remember that these cases, which have always been considered as important because they involved freedom of the press, began in 1940, when the Progressive Bookstore, of Oklahoma City, was raided and Robert Wood, the owner was brought to trial, charged with criminal syndicalism, under an Oklahoma law dating back to the days of World War I. The basis for the prosecution was the possession and sale of books deemed to be subversive. On August 17, 1940, an official raid took place on the Progressive Bookstore and five private homes. The shop's entire stock of books was cleaned out, comprising some 10,000 volumes. Later, many of the seized books, including copies of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution of the United States, were publicly burned in the Oklahoma City Stadium. Robert Wood, his wife, Ina Wood, Eli Jaffee and several of the bookstore's customers who happened to be in the shop at the time of the raid, nine people in all, were convicted of criminal syndicalism and sentenced to ten years in jail and fines of \$5,000 each. The cases attracted nationwide attention, as PW has reported in many numbers.

PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY - v.144. p.1337
October 2, 1943